

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF TURKEY'S
POTENTIAL ADMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION
ON THE WAR AGAINST ISLAMIC TERRORISM**

by

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ABSTRACT

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On 17 December 2004, the European Union (EU) voted to commence accession negotiations in October 2005 with the Republic of Turkey that could set the stage for the first-ever admission of a broadly Muslim nation into the predominantly Christian EU. This is a major step in Turkey's quest to become a member of the politically and economically powerful EU – a quest that has lasted for over forty years. A member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) since 1952 and its sole Muslim member, Turkey has thus far enjoyed only a limited relationship with the EU. In 2004 Turkey ignominiously witnessed the admission of eight former Warsaw Pact nations into the EU. Such an event illustrates that Turkey, good enough to help protect Western Europe throughout the Cold War as a member of NATO and still a key player in European security, simply hasn't measured up to reap the full economic and political benefits of the EU it helped to secure. While the December 2004 EU decision is a positive step, Turkey's EU admission is by no means a certainty. Any number of dynamics could effectively derail Turkey's membership bid. In the post-Cold War strategic environment, however, a Turkey that is firmly aligned with the West through EU membership can potentially have a powerful influence on the war against Islamic terrorism. To support this assertion, this paper will examine: key historical background factors; the importance of EU membership to Turkey; rationale behind the reluctance of the EU to admit Turkey; the increasing influence of Islam within secular Turkey; and potential strategic implications of Turkey's EU admission on the war against Islamic terrorism. The paper will also offer broad recommendations for U.S. policy focusing on diplomacy, strategic communications, and economic support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF TURKEY'S POTENTIAL ADMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION ON THE WAR AGAINST ISLAMIC TERRORISM.....	1
BACKGROUND	2
THE IMPORTANCE OF EU MEMBERSHIP TO TURKEY	4
THE RELUCTANCE OF THE EU TO ADMIT TURKEY	5
HUMAN RIGHTS.....	5
ECONOMIC UNDERDEVELOPMENT.....	6
NON-RECOGNITION OF CYPRUS.....	7
MILITARY'S INFLUENCE ON POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT.....	7
POPULATION AND MIGRATION.....	8
TURKEY IS DIFFERENT.....	9
THE RE-EMERGENCE OF ISLAM IN SECULAR TURKEY	9
STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS ON THE WAR AGAINST ISLAMIC TERRORISM	10
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY	12
DIPLOMACY.....	12
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS.....	13
ECONOMIC SUPPORT.....	13
CONCLUSIONS	14
ENDNOTES.....	15
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	21

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF TURKEY'S POTENTIAL ADMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION ON THE WAR AGAINST ISLAMIC TERRORISM

On 17 December 2004, in a landmark and historic decision during its Brussels Summit, the European Union (EU) voted to commence accession negotiations in October 2005 with the Republic of Turkey that could set the stage for the first-ever admission of a broadly Muslim nation into the predominantly Christian EU. This is a major step in Turkey's quest to become a member of the politically and economically powerful EU – a quest that has lasted for over forty years. A member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) since 1952 and its sole Muslim member, Turkey has thus far enjoyed only a limited relationship with the EU. In 2004 Turkey ignominiously witnessed the admission of eight former Warsaw Pact nations into the EU. It suffered the further indignity of watching Cyprus, a nation it doesn't formally recognize and the focal point of much acrimony with Greece, gain EU membership. Such events illustrate that Turkey, good enough to help protect Western Europe throughout the Cold War as a member of NATO and still a key player in European security, simply hasn't measured up to reap the full economic and political benefits of the EU it helped to secure.

While the December 2004 EU decision is a positive step toward Turkey's eventual EU admission, full EU membership is by no means a certainty. Even if the EU were to decide in October 2005 to admit Turkey, it is estimated that admission would not actually occur for at least ten years to allow Turkey time to meet certain conditions and complete needed social, legal, political, and economic reforms to bring it up to EU standards.¹ This time would also be needed to give the EU time to properly plan and adjust its mechanisms to ensure effective integration. During this lengthy interval, any number of dynamics could effectively derail the process leading to Turkey's admission. There are many in Europe who are either completely against Turkey's entrance into the EU, or advocate something short of full membership. The challenges facing Turkey and the EU in the event of Turkey's eventual admission appear more difficult than those yet faced by any other nation seeking EU membership.²

In the post-Cold War strategic environment, however, a Turkey that is firmly aligned with the West through EU membership can potentially have a powerful influence on the war against Islamic terrorism currently being led by the U.S. To support this assertion, this paper will examine: key historical background factors; the importance of EU membership to Turkey; rationale behind the reluctance of the EU to admit Turkey; the increasing influence of Islam within secular Turkey; and potential strategic implications of Turkey's EU admission on the war against Islamic terrorism. The paper will also offer broad recommendations for U.S. policy

focusing on diplomacy, strategic communications, and economic support. Key historical background factors will now set the appropriate context for our examination.

BACKGROUND

In 1923 after the Ottoman Empire's disastrous defeat in World War I, resulting instability, and invasions by other nations, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk led a movement which created the Republic of Turkey. His vision was for a stable, modern, progressive, democratic, nationalistic, and secular republic patterned after, and fully integrated with, the European West.³ He sought to completely shed the yoke of the Ottoman Empire and its strict Muslim legacy, which he considered corrupt, archaic, and a barrier to progress.⁴ In his attempt to create the republic of his vision, he eradicated nearly every vestige of Ottoman civilization. Chief among his actions was the wholesale dismantling of Islam as the state religion. In the process of doing this, he abolished the sultanate and caliphate; outlawed overt expressions of religious piety; secularized academic institutions; disbanded religious courts; and westernized the legal system, among other things. In Ataturk's new republic, Islam would be purely personal and no longer manifest in a public fashion. There would be little, if any, tolerance for anything that harkened back to Ottoman times.

While Ataturk effectively led his nation until his death in 1938, subsequent civilian governments were largely inept, ineffectual, weak, or corrupt.⁵ From this unsettled environment arose the powerful and politically-engaged military, led by its ubiquitous Turkish General Staff (TGS), which would assume the role of guardian of Ataturk's vision. Looming large behind all facets of politics and government in this ostensibly democratic nation, the TGS would not hesitate to impose its will on governments which threatened the military's power or were deemed to be moving away from secularity toward Islamic fundamentalism. For example, the military-sponsored coups in 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997 are testament to their direct influence.⁶

Serious U.S. interest in Turkey began in 1947 after communist insurgency in Greece and Soviet designs on Turkey revealed a clear threat to the Middle East and Mediterranean regions. Under the Truman Doctrine, which would underpin the U.S. Cold War strategy of containment for the next forty-plus years, the U.S. provided Greece and Turkey significant military and economic aid to help resist the Soviet threat. Owing to its strategic location on NATO's southeastern flank, as well as its military contributions during the Korean War, Turkey was admitted into NATO in 1952. In 1963 Turkey was made an "associate" member of the European Community, the precursor to the EU. This essentially amounted to a limited trade relationship. The 1960s also saw the intensification of the historical conflict between Turkey

and Greece over Cyprus. The situation reached crisis proportions in 1974 when Turkish forces invaded and occupied parts of northern Cyprus to protect the Turkish Cypriot minority from a perceived Greek takeover. To this day, Cyprus remains effectively divided into Greek and Turkish sections, with Turkish occupation forces still present. In 1987 Turkey submitted its official application for admission into the EU. The EU essentially deferred consideration of Turkey's application to the mid-1990s primarily because of Turkey's economic underdevelopment, poor human rights record, and the aftermath of the Warsaw Pact's dissolution.⁷ This would effectively be the first of many subsequent EU "denials" of Turkish membership.

Since its inception, the Republic of Turkey had generally sought to avoid direct involvement in conflicts involving other Muslim nations, such as those in the Middle East, because of internal political sensitivities. For example, despite its Western inclination, Turkey did not involve itself in non-NATO Western involvements such as those during the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars.⁸ In a highly controversial domestic move, however, Turkey reversed this position by directly supporting the U.S. and the coalition arrayed against Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in 1990.⁹ Turkey helped enforce UN economic sanctions against Iraq by ceasing trade with it and shutting down pipelines used to transport Iraqi oil to the Mediterranean, actions which resulted in significant economic hardship. Turkish officials estimate it may have lost up to \$2.4 billion in annual income as a result of economic actions taken against Iraq.¹⁰ Turkey also allowed the U.S. to use Incirlik Air Base for air operations. Turkey probably reversed its traditional position of non-involvement in such actions in hopes of facilitating its chances of EU admission and strengthening ties with the West at a time of great uncertainty after the end of the Cold War.¹¹

Throughout the 1990s, Turkey made significant contributions to NATO and coalition operations in support of Operation NORTHERN WATCH to help protect Iraqi Kurds and operations in the Former Republic of Yugoslavia to help protect Muslim minorities from barbaric ethnic cleansing. In 1996 the EU negotiated a customs union with Turkey, essentially expanding the trade relationship. In 1999 Turkey was made an official candidate for EU membership at the EU's Helsinki Summit, subject to making significant progress in economic, political, social, legal, and human rights reforms.¹²

Events after the year 2000 would further illustrate how close Turkey is to the West militarily, through NATO, yet how far away it still was to complete European acceptance. In the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attack on the U.S., Turkey would prove to be a strong NATO ally in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF). In 2002, it was one of the first nations to command the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan and

provided 1,400 troops to the effort as well.¹³ Later that year at the 2002 Copenhagen EU Summit, however, Turkey was again rebuffed in its quest for membership. Despite the fact Turkey had enacted significant legislation to reform and meet EU conditions, the EU needed to see more positive implementation results. Turkey was still found wanting in its efforts to meet what has since been called the “Copenhagen Criteria.”¹⁴ This criteria includes: “a functioning market economy”; “stable institutions that guarantee democracy”; “adherence to the rule of law”; “respect for human rights”; and “protection of minorities.”¹⁵ Because EU membership is so important to Turkey, the current government, led by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has put a premium on meeting the “Copenhagen Criteria.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF EU MEMBERSHIP TO TURKEY

While there are perhaps many reasons why Turkey so strongly desires EU membership, three warrant special examination: establishing a sense of identity; becoming stronger politically and economically to survive the dynamics of globalization; and accelerating current reform efforts.

Turkey seeks EU membership to enhance and solidify its ties to Europe and the West, thereby establishing a true Western identity.¹⁶ The end of the Cold War, the disappearance of the Warsaw Pact threat, and the perception of being excluded from Europe have led to a sense of doubt, fear, vulnerability, and insecurity within Turkey.¹⁷ NATO changed its focus from containing the juggernaut that was the Warsaw Pact to managing a myriad of new threats. Former Warsaw Pact nations were becoming members of NATO. This rapidly-changing, complex post-Cold War world order had many Turks questioning their identity, strategic value, and position in the world.¹⁸ Many Turks view EU membership as a mechanism to solidify Turkey’s identity and sense of belonging, allaying the above concerns.

Turkey has long sought to share in the political and economic benefits enjoyed by EU members. Indeed, EU membership would be a manifestation of Ataturk’s vision of a modern, progressive, and prosperous Turkey. Today’s international environment is globalized, interconnected, and highly competitive. EU membership can also provide Turkey the increased political and economic strength to survive and thrive in this environment. Politically, Turkey has recognized that it can deal most effectively with the fragmenting effects of globalization “by integrating with the global community through the EU accession process.”¹⁹ According to scholar H. Tarik Oguzlu, the EU has a perfect track record as no country aspiring to EU membership has fallen prey to dismemberment as a result of globalization.²⁰ Oguzlu asserts that, economically, “Turkey would hardly be able to integrate with the global economy without

remaining in the EU accession process.”²¹ As a result, Oguzlu adds, “...it is unlikely that significant foreign investment will come to Turkey unless it becomes more stable and gives the impression that it belongs to the Western world.”²²

Various political, economic, legal, and social reforms, which will be covered briefly in later sections, are required for Turkey’s EU admission. Many Turks see the march toward EU membership as a prime catalyst for accelerating current reform efforts. Scholar David L. Phillips states, “...liberals and the business community want membership because it will promote their basic freedoms and accelerate economic reform. Minorities, including the Kurds, see it as the best way to secure greater human rights. Islamists think such a move will reduce chances of a military takeover...”²³

While Turkey has longingly sought EU admission, there are various reasons for the EU’s reluctance to admit Turkey. Some of these reasons are valid and are being addressed. Others are potentially intractable and could doom Turkey’s chances.

THE RELUCTANCE OF THE EU TO ADMIT TURKEY

There are five primary, stated reasons for the EU’s reluctance to admit Turkey. They focus on the following issues: Turkey’s poor human rights record; economic underdevelopment; non-recognition of Cyprus; the influence of the military on Turkey’s politics and government; and concerns about Turkey’s large population, growth rate, and potential for mass migration.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ironically, the march toward Ataturk’s vision of a nation that was part of the West resulted in actions that were diametrically opposed to values deeply espoused by the West – those of human rights. Civilian governments and the ever-present military shadow enacted harsh societal controls which were deemed necessary in order to preserve Ataturk’s vision.²⁴ Consequently, severe limits were placed on freedom of speech, expression, assembly, and religion. There has been little to no tolerance for views contrary to those of the state, for movements posing threats to the government’s or military’s power, or for anything deemed as religious fundamentalism. Abuses such as prison torture, imprisonments without due process, arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, and censorship became commonplace.²⁵

Since the formation of the Turkish Republic, Turkey’s Kurds, a distinct ethnic minority group now numbering over ten million and comprising approximately 20% of Turkey’s population, have endured inordinate suffering. For generations, Kurds roamed and occupied a region known as Kurdistan, which was comprised primarily of significant portions of what is now modern-day

Turkey, Iraq, and Iran. After the Ottoman Empire's collapse, the Kurds sought their own independent, autonomous state. Their efforts were met with crushing violence in Turkey as Atatürk consolidated his power. Through the years, many thousands of Kurds have since perished in conflicts with Turkish authorities. Kurdish culture has also been harshly suppressed. Conflict between the Turks and Kurds reached apogee from 1984 through 1999 when the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), a Marxist-Leninist separatist group, launched a sustained terror campaign against the Turkish government.²⁶

Since 2002 Erdogan's government has enacted sweeping social and legal reforms to help rectify its tragic human rights legacy. Some examples include: abolishment of the death penalty, except in wartime; lifting restrictions on Kurdish language, education, and broadcasts; reforming the prison system; and relaxing restrictions on freedom of the press, association, and expression.²⁷

ECONOMIC UNDERDEVELOPMENT

Since Turkey's inception in 1923, its economy has been largely agricultural in nature. It has been relatively slow to modernize and can be accurately characterized as underdeveloped and unproductive. Until the 1980s, Turkey's economy had been strictly regulated by the state. Since that time, in an effort to spur growth, the government took measures to shift the economy toward a more market-based, private sector model.²⁸ While this shift has led to periods of economic growth, this growth has often been erratic, with serious imbalances and instabilities. Problems such as poor fiscal discipline, a weak banking sector, public sector debt that exceeded 10% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and choking bureaucratic regulation have led to economic fits and starts, high double digit inflation, and low foreign investment.²⁹ For example, inflation reached as high as 80% in the 1990s and foreign investment had been less than \$1 billion annually.³⁰ Further complicating matters has been the loss of Iraq as a trading partner and the shutdown of key oil pipelines traversing Turkey to the Mediterranean, due to UN sanctions since 1990. As previously discussed, Turkey has estimated total annual revenue losses in excess of \$2 billion. Turkey's economic woes hit, perhaps, an all-time low in 2001 when banking sector failures forced Turkey to float the lira, pushing the country into severe recession.³¹ During this time, economic contraction and unemployment both exceeded 10%,³² and Gross National Product (GNP) fell by 9.5%.³³

Thanks to a sound recovery plan and \$16.4 billion in loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Turkey was able to stabilize its spiraling economy.³⁴ Since 2001, the Turkish government has launched massive economic reforms to get back on track, as well as to meet

EU economic conditions. Examples of these measures include: reducing inflation, over-valued currency, interest rates, public debt, and bureaucracy; restructuring its banking system; tightening fiscal and monetary policy; and modernizing its administrative methods.³⁵ Early evidence indicates these measures are having positive effects. Turkey has exhibited economic growth over the past three years. Its GDP grew by 7.8% in 2002 and 5.8% in 2003.³⁶ Through the first half of 2004, inflation was down to approximately 12%.³⁷ International trade and investment seem to be opening up as well. During the first eight months of 2004, Turkish exports to EU nations rose 24% and foreign investment rose to \$656 million, up from \$179 million the previous year.³⁸

Despite these encouraging signs, there is still cause for EU concern. Turkey's per capita GDP of approximately \$6,700 is less than one-third the EU average.³⁹ With approximately 35% of its work force involved in agriculture, Turkey's economic integration with the heavily industrialized EU will meet with added difficulty.⁴⁰ By comparison, the current EU nation with the highest agricultural labor force is Poland, with approximately 19%.⁴¹ Considering all economic measures, Turkey would be the poorest EU member state by far. Turkey, however, remains undaunted and appears to be doing everything it can to reverse its troubled economic legacy.

NON-RECOGNITION OF CYPRUS

Even though Cyprus, led by a Greek majority, has been a member of the United Nations since 1961 and was admitted to the EU in 2004, it has never received formal recognition as a state from Turkey. Turkey only recognizes the northern Turkish portion of the de facto partitioned island. With approximately 20% of the population, Turkish Cypriots occupy over 30% of Cyprus.⁴² Turkey's refusal to formally recognize Cyprus has remained a major sticking point and an issue that will have to be resolved during Turkey's EU accession process.

MILITARY'S INFLUENCE ON POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

Since 1923 Turkey has largely been a democracy in name only. Since the beginning of the republic, the TGS has taken on the mantle of "promoter and protector of Atatürk's legacy."⁴³ According to Phillips, "...it has led the military beyond protection of the nation's territory to include warding off threats to public order, such as separatism, terrorism, and religious fundamentalism."⁴⁴ With respect to the latter, the military "sees Islamic fundamentalism as an impediment to modernity and a threat to the nation's security."⁴⁵

The military's influence in politics and government stems from formal authority. Phillips points out, "...the 1982 constitution requires the cabinet to give priority consideration to decisions of the National Security Council (NSC), an advisory group of top military and cabinet members. The constitution also requires half of the NSC be comprised of military officers. Officers of the TGS have more influence than political leaders when it comes to setting and advancing national goals and are thus the main arbiters of power."⁴⁶ This has inevitably led to numerous ineffective, inept, incompetent, corrupt, irresponsible, and weak civilian governments. One of the sad ironies of this highly dysfunctional arrangement has been the fact that the political reforms necessary to achieve true democracy and garner EU membership are the same ones that would effectively strip the military and government of much of their power, prestige, and privilege. It is little wonder why they resisted enacting such reforms for so long. Since 2002 Erdogan has led massive political reforms, working with moderate military leaders, aimed at establishing firm and effective civilian control and drastically reducing the TGS's influence on Turkish politics and government.⁴⁷

POPULATION AND MIGRATION

With a current population of approximately 70 million and an annual growth rate of about 1.13%,⁴⁸ Turkey is projected to be more populous than any current EU member state by the year 2010.⁴⁹ This causes great concern to European nations as they envision a mass migration of millions of relatively poor Turks flooding job markets under the free labor movement and employment provisions of the EU charter. Some European nations, such as Germany, have some historical experience with a similar phenomenon.

In 1961 a bilateral agreement between Germany and Turkey brought thousands of Turks to German factories and assembly lines as "guest workers."⁵⁰ This arrangement, based on the assumption it would be rotational and temporary, was envisioned to provide Germany inexpensive labor to fuel its growing economic expansion, while also providing Turkey economic benefits through portions of incomes being sent home. Through renewable work permits and family unification programs, however, many Turks simply remained in Germany. Many Turks also migrated to other European nations. By the early 1970s, when the guest worker arrangement ended, there were approximately 1.5 million Turks in Europe.⁵¹ Today, there are an estimated "3.5 million Turks living abroad, with approximately two-thirds of them living in Germany."⁵²

Whereas the guest worker arrangements had some limitations on labor movement, such movement under the EU charter is unlimited among member nations. Any worker from an EU

state can essentially move anywhere else within the EU and compete for jobs. As was the case during the guest worker experience, it is still difficult to effectively integrate relatively poor, often uneducated Muslims into European societies. Many Europeans think further migration would upset the entire socio-economic order of Europe.⁵³ The problems of integration, the “rise of Islamic militancy, and the discovery of organized Islamist terror cells in Europe” have led to strong anti-immigrant sentiments.^{54,55} There is also a further, associated belief that Europeans would be inheriting regional instabilities by virtue of Turkey sharing borders with Iran, Iraq, and Syria.

TURKEY IS DIFFERENT

Perhaps more telling than the five primary stated reasons above is a factor that, though often unstated in the past, has currently gained public voice through key EU leaders. This is the sheer sentiment that Turkey is simply too different from Europe as a result of its Muslim culture, history, identity, and way of life. This view was most vociferously expressed by former French President and EU Commissioner Valéry Giscard d’Estaing in an interview from *Le Monde* where he asserted, “[Turkey] has a different culture, a different approach, and a different way of life. It is not a European country,” and that EU membership would be “the end of Europe.”⁵⁶ Related to this is a belief that “Islam is the chief rival to Latin Christendom.”⁵⁷ Although d’Estaing’s remarks were roundly criticized, they have nonetheless been shared by other influential Europeans. Former West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, for one, has also publicly expressed similar views.⁵⁸

Both perceived and actual backlash in Europe has led many Turks to draw closer to their Muslim faith as a source of strength and comfort. The re-emergence of Islam as an integral part of Turkish life, however, has pervaded well beyond Turkish communities in Europe to the very heartland of secular Turkey itself.

THE RE-EMERGENCE OF ISLAM IN SECULAR TURKEY

Many Turks, since the beginning of the republic, have chafed under the suppression of Islam under Ataturk’s strict secularism.⁵⁹ Islam is much more than a religion; it is a way of life. The dislocating effects of globalization and resulting disaffection have led many Turks back to this way of life and closer to their fundamental faith for peace and comfort.⁶⁰ Turkey’s government was simply never going to be able to completely suppress Islam, as popular pressure in the 1940s led to the “restoration of religious education in public schools.”⁶¹ This has since led to increased tolerance toward Islam that has resulted in the building of new mosques, Koran

schools, and research centers, as well as the appearance of religious journals, books, newspapers, radio and television stations, and Islamic intellectualism.⁶²

The 1980s saw the subtle rise in more public manifestations of Islam through the moderate government of Prime Minister Turgut Ozal. Scholar Robert D. Kaplan points out that, before his death in 1993, Ozal was able to “restore religion to Turkey’s political space without threatening the country’s pro-Western orientation” or quest for progress and modernity.⁶³ Ozal was also moving in a direction “that would have effected compromise with the Kurds based on the Islamic faith Turks and Kurds have in common.”⁶⁴

Scholars Mujeeb R. Khan and M. Hakan Yavuz note, “...in the mid-1990s, a Muslim-oriented political movement emerged as the most dynamic and popular force in Turkey.”⁶⁵ The fundamentalist Welfare Party of Necmettin Erbakan was able to form a coalition and take the reins of government in 1996. His views, however, were too extreme for the military, which forced him out and dissolved his party in a non-violent, “soft” coup in 1997.⁶⁶ From the remnants of Erbakan’s dissolved party rose the pro-Islamist, yet moderate, Justice and Development Party (AKP) led by Erdogan.⁶⁷ A devout Muslim, Erdogan distanced himself from Erbakan’s perceived radical path and instead chose a moderate, conservative, and reformist direction with emphases on fixing the economy, stamping out corruption, and gaining full EU membership.⁶⁸ Erdogan led the AKP to a clear majority victory in the 2002 elections.

As of February 2005, the AKP remains in power, with Erdogan as Prime Minister. While seeing that many Turks have long sought more religious freedom and a larger role for religion in Turkish society, Erdogan thus far appears to be navigating an effective course toward that end.⁶⁹ The resurgence of the Islamic way of life in Turkey was probably inevitable in light of the excessively secular path chosen by Ataturk. It appears the resurgence of Islam in Turkey is taking a decidedly moderate, instead of radical or extremist, course.⁷⁰ There are implications of this phenomenon, as well as others, on Turkey’s potential role in the war against Islamic terrorism.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS ON THE WAR AGAINST ISLAMIC TERRORISM

In the post-Cold War strategic environment, a Turkey that is firmly integrated and aligned with the West through EU membership can potentially have a powerful impact in its region and thus in the U.S.-led war against Islamic terrorism. Turkey continues to occupy a unique strategic position at the geographic, cultural, religious, and historical crossroads of Europe and Asia, of Western and Islamic worlds.⁷¹ This strategic position, along with Turkey’s commitment,

as evidenced by its ISAF operations in Afghanistan, makes Turkey a formidable ally in dealing with the scourge of terrorism.

In his *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, President George W. Bush seeks to "...wage a war of ideas to make clear that all acts of terrorism are illegitimate, to ensure that the conditions and ideologies that promote terrorism do not find fertile ground in any nation, to diminish the underlying conditions that terrorists seek to exploit in areas most at risk..."⁷² Turkey could provide a critical moderating influence to help other Muslim nations deal with the harsh and complex global dynamics that lead to dislocation, disaffection, and ultimately terrorism. Turkey could serve as a counterbalance to the forces that breed and nurture extremism, hate, and violence in certain Muslim nations in its region. To be this moderating influence, Turkey would have to become an effective model and example of a strong, stable, modern, moderate, and tolerant Muslim nation anchored in democratic, liberal, pluralistic principles.⁷³ Further, the resurgence of moderate Islam throughout public life in Turkey can have a strong positive effect as Turkey exerts influence in the region. Other Muslim nations in which Islam pervades daily life might better identify with a Turkey that is also closer to its Islamic roots. Turkey can thus assume a more effective posture to exert this positive influence on areas in the Middle East and Central Asia that are either current or potential breeding grounds for the development of terrorists. Not only does Turkey border Iran, Iraq, and Syria, which have known terror connections, but it also borders Muslim Azerbaijan, and shares ethnic ties with the Central Asian Turkic peoples of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. Turkey must be able to stand as a beacon of hope in its region so it can help influence regional strategic dynamics. EU membership can have the effect of accelerating Turkey's political, economic, and social transformation toward becoming this model Muslim nation. Turkey's new Muslim democratic leadership is committed to taking on such a leadership role in the Islamic world.⁷⁴

A Turkey that is firmly anchored with the West could be "the tie that binds Islam and the West."⁷⁵ A clash of civilizations, theorized by Samuel Huntington as a possible post-Cold War world order, between Islam and the West is neither inevitable nor preordained. Islamic and Western civilizations are compatible, can coexist, and can thrive in peace. From the U.S. perspective, President Bush asserts, "...we will continue assuring Muslims that American values are not at odds with Islam..."⁷⁶

According to Khan and Yavuz, "there are perceptions that foreign policy-making in the current Bush administration is increasingly dominated by hard-liners with a pronounced animus toward the Islamic world."⁷⁷ With a strong, viable Turkey anchored in the West, it is likely the

U.S. would be more able and willing to rely less on perceived coercive instruments of national power that, regardless of their just application, often have the effect of polarizing Islamic sentiment firmly against it. The U.S. and Europe would thus be able to exert indirect “soft” power through Turkey.⁷⁸

In the event, however, that “hard” power must be employed, closer Turkish ties to the West as a result of EU membership could also open up increased basing options in Turkey for the U.S. and Europe. There is also the fact that Turkey has a very powerful military which serves as a counterbalancing force, if not a deterrent, in the region and can provide devastating power projection capabilities should the need ever arise.

There are some who “have warned that anything short of fully anchoring Turkey in the EU would likely lead it to drift into an Islamic orbit fostering the conditions for a clash of civilizations.”⁷⁹ Phillips adds, “...rejection, on the other hand, would set back domestic reforms and radicalize religious extremists. Instead of a bulwark of stability and moderation, Turkey would become a hotbed of anti-Americanism and extremism. Rather than serving as a beachhead for Western interests in the Middle East, it would join the arc of unstable countries in the region that oppose the liberal values that form the foundation of the EU.”⁸⁰

Given today’s volatile and unstable regional environment, Turkey is clearly a “frontline state amidst areas of instability” and may have a more critical role in the war against Islamic terrorism than it had as NATO’s southeastern fortress against Soviet expansion.⁸¹ The U.S. is in a strong position to facilitate Turkey’s EU admission and fulfillment of this vital new role.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY

The U.S. should absolutely support Turkey’s bid for EU membership. Not only has Turkey been a close NATO ally for over fifty years, and has made major strides in its reform efforts to meet the EU’s Copenhagen Criteria, but Turkey can also potentially play a pivotal role in the war against Islamic terrorism. The following are broad recommendations for U.S. policy focusing on diplomacy, strategic communications, and economic support.

DIPLOMACY

U.S. leaders should continue to actively advocate to EU leaders on Turkey’s behalf. Prior to the 2002 EU Summit, for example, President George W. Bush made personal calls to EU leadership on Turkey’s behalf.⁸² This type of active advocacy must continue, even after the December 2004 EU decision to proceed with accession negotiations. The U.S. must attempt to diplomatically overcome both overt and covert forces within Europe that may attempt to derail

Turkey's EU membership bid. We must not only emphasize the progress being made by Turkey as it reforms virtually every sector of society, but also the strategic importance of keeping Turkey anchored to the West. This is especially needed in the midst of this new, more complex war on Islamic terrorism we are waging together.

We should accept and embrace the moderate "Islamization" of Turkey. This phenomenon in Turkey is a natural result of the freedoms so cherished in a true democracy, but which have been utterly suppressed for over eighty years. It is the manifestation of Turkey's desired way of life. As we have discussed, Islam and the West can and must flourish together. We must help build Turkey into a positive model that can be emulated by other Muslim nations and continue to encourage the current leadership to stay the course of its reform efforts. We must do this in a public manner that showcases Turkey as a strong, robust Muslim democracy and not as a U.S. lackey or puppet. Although perceptions are difficult to change, we must make every effort to do so and treat Turkey as a true strategic partner.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

The U.S. should continue to make public policy statements and press releases advocating Turkey's EU membership. Again, the U.S. has done this in the past, most recently by Secretary of State Colin Powell who issued an official statement on 17 December 2004 congratulating both Turkey and the EU on the decision to begin accession negotiations.⁸³ These official U.S. statements add further credibility to Turkey's cause and, despite recent U.S. differences with EU nations, still carry significant weight.

U.S. strategic communications in support of Turkey's EU bid should also be done within the context of positively influencing the broader Muslim audience. U.S. strategic communications, a fertile topic of research and debate, have often been less than effective, especially within the Muslim world. A September 2004 Defense Science Board report on strategic communications indicates highly unfavorable opinions toward U.S. strategic messages from moderate Muslim nations such as Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, United Arab Emirates, and Egypt.⁸⁴ Any strategic communications strategy undertaken by the U.S. should address the Muslim world in a more holistic and culturally sensitive fashion.

ECONOMIC SUPPORT

The U.S. should continue to support the IMF's program of economic assistance to Turkey and the current path of Turkey's economic modernization programs, which have led to economic growth the past three years. The U.S. should consider supplementing the IMF's

program with a complementary fiscal support package of aid and debt relief, contingent upon continued Turkish fiscal discipline. The U.S. might also consider measures to promote increased U.S. and foreign investment and trade with Turkey. The U.S. currently stands as Turkey's third-largest export market and its fourth-largest import partner.⁸⁵

CONCLUSIONS

The EU's 17 December 2004 decision to begin accession negotiations with Turkey in October 2005 is a big step not only for Turkey's dream of eventual EU membership, but also for the potentially powerful impact Turkey can have on the war against Islamic terrorism. It is critical for Turkey's EU accession process to continue unabated and undeterred. Turkey's role in the strategic environment of today and tomorrow may prove to be far more vital than its role ever was during the Cold War. More integrally tied to Europe and the West through EU membership, Turkey could be in a position to help significantly decrease the conditions that foster terrorist development in its region, as well as serve as the link that binds Islamic and Western civilizations in harmony. If there is to be a clash of civilizations, let it be between Islamic terrorists and the rest of the world.

WORD COUNT = 5,756

ENDNOTES

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²⁴Khan and Yavuz, 4.

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